

# ARTICLE ALERT

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**July 2009**

## DEMOCRACY & GLOBAL ISSUES

1. **THE BRAIN** Zimmer, Carl  
(Discover Magazine, vol. 30, no. 7, July/August 2009)

With billions of brain neurons, humans have difficulty staying focused. Mind wandering does not necessarily mean boredom, rather, it is normal. Although we make mistakes when our minds wander, it may also be beneficial. Studies show a profound mind wandering, or "zoning out," when the person is completely unaware they have lost focus, may be "the most fruitful type." Mind wandering may invite creative flashes of inspiration. Our brains maintain a delicate balance between near-term and long-term thinking, while monitoring our awareness. Currently available online at <http://discovermagazine.com/2009/jul-aug/15-brain-stop-paying-attention-zoning-out-crucial-mental-state>

2. **CATCHING A WAVE** Rusch, Elizabeth  
(Smithsonian, July 2009, pp. 66-71)

In this article, Rusch profiles electrical engineer Annette von Jouanne, head of the Wallace Energy Systems and Renewables Facility at Oregon State University, and one of the driving forces in the development of wave energy. By some projections, tapping the energy of the tides could meet 6.5 percent of U.S. electric power needs. Many researchers over the years have attempted to build devices to transform the energy of waves into electricity, but von Jouanne advocates simplicity in design to achieve the most dependable energy flow. Her current design now being tested is shaped like a flying saucer with a generating coil and a sliding magnet assembly capable of generating a few kilowatts of electricity in a gentle wave. Building the device is only one design problem; a means to keep it anchored and consistently functioning in the tides is also challenging. The Oregon State researchers also need to avoid creating a device that could damage the seaside ecosystem. Currently available online at <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/Catching-a-Wave.html#>

3. **INFOMANIA** Marsan, Carolyn  
(Government Executive, vol. 41, no. 5, May 2009, pp. 34-42)

The author notes that as participatory government brings an onslaught of public comments online, agencies will need the right tools to make sense of it all. In 2008, the General Services Administration (GSA) had 214 million electronic communications with the U.S. public, and it expects that number to increase in 2009. Similar situations have developed at other government agencies as they realize that more and more of public opinion and commentary are going to be sustained through the new media. However, these new examples of social media have several challenges in adopting customer feedback techniques like those used in the private sector, such as asking citizens to rank their interests on various subjects. While federal agencies are new at gathering and analyzing public comments, private business is experienced in managing feedback by combining automated and manual processes, structured and unstructured data. Government agencies also have legal restrictions; they often have to negotiate standard terms of services with providers because the government is bound by multiple federal regulatory requirements. Currently available online at <http://www.govexec.com/features/0509-01/0509-01s3.htm>

4. **SLIME CITY** Orent, Wendy  
(Discover Magazine, vol. 30, no. 7, July/August 2009)

Most microbes live in a gelatinous substance they produce, known as biofilm or bioslime; it is everywhere, from unbrushed teeth to rocks lining forest ponds. Bioslime hosts well-protected communities of diverse bacteria that thrive together, feed off community waste, and repel antibiotics. Since bioslime is becoming a major factor in hospital infections -- on catheters, hip and knee replacements, and implants such as pacemakers -- research is underway to discover how bioslime communities function and communicate. Bioslime "quorum sensors" that determine when a maximum bacterial concentration occurs in a host have been detected. These enable bacteria to release their toxins all at once, for greatest effect, killing or debilitating the host. Scientists interviewed include Princeton University geneticist Bonnie Bassler, Tufts University molecular biologist Naomi Balaban, and Randall Wolcott, a Texas physician, who pioneered new methods of combating bioslime infections in wounds. "Biofilms are not what we learned in microbiology," he says.

5. **WILL AMERICANS TUNE TO AL JAZEERA?** Helman, Christopher  
(Forbes Magazine, July 13, 2009)
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The Doha, Qatar-based Al Jazeera news network reaches 53 million Arabic language viewers and 140 million English language households in 100 countries. Starting on July 1, Al Jazeera English (AJE) will begin broadcasting in Washington, D.C., its first around-the-clock carriage in the U.S. outside of Toledo, Ohio and Burlington, Vermont. There, it will face a huge marketing hurdle – the perception that it is biased against the United States and Western Europe. The optimists believe the Obama era and an American interest in more global perspectives will reel in viewers, but conservatives say Al Jazeera is anti-American and has connections with al-Qaeda. Not so, according to Tony Burman, managing director of AJE, who says that network is on par with CNN International and BBC World in quality of programming. Furthermore, the government of Qatar, which owns the network, is relatively liberal, no enemy of the United States (it hosts the largest U.S. air base in the region) and allegedly exerts no censorship on the network. Burman believes the biggest hurdle will be to persuade cable companies like Comcast to carry AJE. Currently available online at <http://www.forbes.com/forbes/2009/0713/comcast-al-qaeda-will-americans-tune-to-al-jazeera.html>

## ECONOMIC SECURITY

### 6. MBAS GONE WILD Khurana, Rakesh (American Interest, vol. 4, no. 6, July/August 2009)

The economic crisis that has befallen the U.S. has come about as result of the prevalence of a particular character type in American political, economic and social institutions -- the "loose individual", who isn't bound by norms of fairness and equity, writes Khurana, a professor at the Harvard Business School. "Outside of their intimates, their relations with others are anchored only in self-interest." The author contends that the economic collapse and an almost decade-long cascade of sordid revelations stretching from Enron to AIG are evidence that "too many loose individuals have been admitted to the inner sanctums of American capitalism." As to how they have come to exert such influence, Khurana points a finger at university-based business schools. When universities began instituting business schools during the U.S. Progressive era in the early 20th century, they sought to instill social values in future managers so that "large corporations would be run in the interests of society," Khurana writes. The commitment to the social good began to unravel after World War II, with the proliferation of dozens of new business schools and a lowering of academic standards. The final abandonment of attempts to teach ethical standards came in the late 1980s, Khurana believes. With business educators adopting the philosophy that "the sole purpose of the corporation is to maximize shareholder value," they taught their students that "managers and employees cannot trust one another, which in turn

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sets in motion a self-reinforcing cycle encouraging opportunism and cheating." Khurana calls for a revamping of business education to create a new generation of business leaders who will help solve a critical problem, not cause it. Currently available online at <http://www.the-american-interest.com/article.cfm?piece=623>

**7. TAMED TIGERS, DISTRESSED DRAGON** Klein, Brian; Cukier, Kenneth  
(Foreign Affairs, vol. 88, no. 4, July-August 2009)

According to Klein, a Council on Foreign Relations international affairs fellow, and Cukier, a Tokyo correspondent for The Economist, the global economic turmoil has hurt the formerly rapidly expanding Asian economies hardest. "By emphasizing exports, Asian countries simply replaced a reliance on foreign capital with a dependence on foreign demand," they say. As Americans save more, they will buy less of what Asia produces; pursuing export-led growth distracted Asians from building the institutions necessary for sustainable domestic economies. Those countries that manipulated their currencies "in effect subsidized exporters at the expense of other domestic producers and consumers," the authors say. Some countries also ignored corruption, inadequate rule of law, and environmental degradation. The success of export-led growth made structural reform even more difficult because of resistance from vested interests; the Asian economies are now ill prepared for the hard decisions needed to cope with a likely persistent difficult economic environment. The authors say they should be restructuring to create domestic demand by promoting human capital -- especially education, improving incomes, and reducing savings. They need to pay workers more money and, most importantly, establish social safety nets. "The lack of basic economic safeguards is the biggest reason why Asians save so much, and reducing those savings would unlock consumption," the authors say.

**8. UNTANGLING THE RECOVERY** Brodsky, Robert  
(Government Executive, vol. 41, no. 6, June 2009, pp. 24-26, 28, 30)

The author believes that government has another chance at proving it can be effective in the present economic climate. In early May 2009, President Obama unveiled his formal fiscal 2010 budget, including a list of 121 cuts to federal programs that added up to a savings of about \$17 billion. Then there is the \$787 billion American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, signed less than a month after Obama took office, as an opportunity to prop up a faltering economy, spur long-term investments in energy and in education, and put millions of unemployed Americans back to work. For the nation's over 2.7 million federal employees, the stimulus plan and the new FY2010 budget represent chances to prove that the government can still operate as an effective management

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organization. Right now, the most important use of funds are those that are allocated by the Recovery Act to get Americans back to work and to restart a faltering economy. Of this, \$60 billion is expected to be spent on federal contracts with another \$84 million going to the Recovery Accountability and Transparency Board that was created to oversee fund disbursement and to manage Recovery.gov, the central government repository for information on the stimulus. Currently available online at <http://www.govexec.com/features/0609-01/0609-01s1.htm>

**9. THE WRONG MAN AT THE WRONG TIME** Leuchtenburg, William E.  
(American Heritage, vol. 59, no. 2, Summer 2009, pp. 26-31, 72)

Leuchtenburg notes that, for all his previous successes, President Herbert Hoover proved incapable of arresting the economic free fall of the depression, or soothing the fears of a distressed nation. In 1932, he was defeated by a large majority to Franklin Roosevelt, who promised to get the economy back on track. As with President Obama in 2009, a number of Hoover's predecessors had confronted financial crises, but none had left him a usable legacy upon which to build. A former secretary of commerce, Hoover moved quickly to arrest the decline, summoning business leaders and government officials for meetings in November 1932. Hoover implored manufacturers to maintain wage rates and step up projects, asked unions not to strike and to withdraw demands for wage increases, and coaxed the Federal Reserve into expanding the money supply. Initially, his efforts were successful, however as the depression deepened and unemployment rose, the federal government provided little funding for relief. The author writes that Hoover "had no sense of how to reach out to a desperate nation" -- among other things, he advocated tax increases along with cuts in government spending, the wrong solution for an ailing economy. Perhaps no single action cemented Hoover's reputation of heartlessness than his order for the army to disperse members of the "Bonus Army" of World War I veterans and their families who gathered in Washington in spring 1932 to lobby Congress to redeem bonuses for their wartime services. Currently available online at <http://www.americanheritage.com/articles/web/20090601-Herbert-Hoover-American-History-Presidents-Economy-The-Great-Depression-Roaring-Twenties-Hooverilles-Unemployment.shtml>

## **INTERNATIONAL SECURITY**

**10. BEYOND THE FOUR FREEDOMS** Grandin, Greg  
(NACLA Report on the Americas, vol. 42, no. 1, January/February 2009, pp. 27-30)

Grandin, who teaches history at New York University, sees American policies in Latin America historically as a preview of U.S. actions around the globe. Latin America can become the

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centerpiece of a redeemed American diplomacy; the region would welcome U.S. influence to create a de-ideologized hemispheric policy, one that downplays terrorism, places high priority on poverty and inequality, and expresses a willingness to solve common problems. Currently available online at [http://nacla.org/files/A04201029\\_1.pdf](http://nacla.org/files/A04201029_1.pdf)

#### **11.A COUNTERTERRORISM STRATEGY FOR THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION**

Hoffman, Bruce

Terrorism and Political Violence, vol. 21, no. 3, July 2009, pp. 359-377)

Al-Qaeda is most dangerous when it has a safe haven from which to plant and plot attacks. It has acquired such a haven in Pakistan's Federal Administered Tribal Areas and its North-West Frontier Province and nearby areas, concludes terrorism expert Bruce Hoffman at Georgetown University. During 2008 al-Qaeda was able to re-group and re-organize in these lawless regions along the Afghan-Pakistan border, once again having a sanctuary in which it can operate, while marshalling its forces to continue its struggle with the U.S. The highest priority for the new administration and U.S. allies is to refocus on Afghanistan and Pakistan, Hoffman says; part of any counterterrorism strategy must include an understanding that al-Qaeda and its local affiliates cannot be defeated by military means alone. At its basic level, a new strategy requires two major requirements -- a military capability to systematically destroy and weaken enemy capabilities, and the means to break the cycle of terrorist recruitment and effectively counter al-Qaeda's information operations. Online link to full text available at <http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/content~content=a912648440~db=all~jumptype=rss>

#### **12.DISCONTENT WITHIN THE RANKS?** Heinecken, Lindy

(Armed Forces & Society vol. 35, no. 3, April 2009, pp. 477-500)

A number of studies have examined how armed forces have adapted to become more cost-effective and flexible. However, relatively few studies have looked at how these trends have affected attitudes toward military employment. The author discusses findings of a survey conducted among middle-ranking officers in the United Kingdom, Canada, South Africa, and Germany, which studied the attitudes of officers toward military employment, the impact of organizational restructuring on their careers and on commitment to military service, issues relating to pay, service, and work conditions, trust in their superiors' ability to protect their interests; and there is a need for some form of independent representation. The study concludes that the present discontent within the ranks is creating "a kind of professional or institutional disunity," which may require changes in how employee relations are managed within armed forces.

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### 13. **NOT SO HUDDLED MASSES: MULTICULTURALISM AND FOREIGN POLICY**

McConnell, Scott

(World Affairs, vol. 171, no. 4, Spring 2009, pp. 39-50)

The author examines the connection between America's immigration and foreign policy throughout U.S. history. Although Hispanics will make up a quarter of the American population by 2040, this does not guarantee a different foreign policy. Apart from the highly-mobilized Cuban émigré community, Latinos' foreign-affairs activism remains modest since it is not clear that they have either the resources or the will to influence American foreign policy in a singular way; most new immigrant groups tend to vote Democratic. The author also analyzes the power of ethnic lobbies to exert influence upon U.S. policy. Currently available online at <http://www.worldaffairsjournal.org/2009%20-%20Spring/full-McConnell.html>

## **U.S. SOCIETY & VALUES**

### 14. **THE WRITER'S EYE** Frail, T.A.

(Smithsonian, vol. 40, no. 1, April 2009, pp. 84-89)

Eudora Welty, who was born 100 years ago, is one of the great figures in American literature; less well-known is that she was an avid amateur photographer before any of her written work was published. Her pictures, taken in Mississippi in the early-to-mid-1930s, show the rural poor and convey the worry of the Great Depression. Welty, notes the author, had a remarkable ability to put her subjects at ease, many of whom were African-American; her interest in photography and curiosity and empathy with her subjects inspired her future writings. Welty said that "photography taught me to be able to capture transience ... these were things a story writer needed to know."

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